

# About The Charismatic Renewal



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## “Charismatic Renewal Turning 40”

Thousands to Mark Anniversary and Join Vigil of Pentecost ZE06050701

ROME, MAY 7, 2006 ([Zenit.org](#)).- More than 10,000 members of communities of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal will observe the vigil of Pentecost with Benedict XVI.

The celebration, organized in conjunction with the Pontifical Council for the Laity, coincides with the 40th anniversary of the renewal, and is one of a series of events organized by the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services (ICCRS).

According to Oreste Pesare, director of the ICCRS office in the Vatican, the events "will certainly make the imminent celebration of Pentecost richer and more fruitful."

Communities of the renewal will also participate in the Mass on Pentecost Sunday in the Vatican, presided over by the Pope.

Afterward, renewal members will gather in Marino, 14 miles from Rome, "to celebrate the Holy Spirit together in a special way. We are expecting some 10,000 participants," added Pesare.

"The meeting will be entitled 'My Soul Magnifies the Lord,' and will give glory to God for the work carried out every day in each of the faithful through the Holy Spirit, explained the ICCRS director.

### The "unknown God"

"The Holy Spirit, considered until a few years ago as the 'unknown God,' is the one who, with his grace, tirelessly changes the lives of thousands of people in all corners of the world, who with renewed joy, through the experience of 'baptism in the Spirit,' begin a new life lived, precisely, in the Holy Spirit," Pesare told ZENIT.

"He is the one we wish to honor and glorify publicly, responding to the appeal that both John Paul II as well as Benedict XVI made to CCR and the whole Church: to spread the 'culture of Pentecost' and the action of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church and in each of the faithful," the director added.

"This celebration, which will include moments of prayer, listening, witness and invocation of the Spirit, will end with a celebration of prayer, a music concert and dance which will be presented as prayer by artists of different countries ... and all to give glory to the Holy Spirit and to thank him for all he does every day in our lives," explained Pesare.

Father Raniero Cantalamessa, Pontifical Household preacher, and Father Tom Forrest, one of the initiators of the charismatic experience in the Catholic Church, will speak on grace and the power of the Holy Spirit during the celebration in Marino.

### International conference

From June 5-9 an international open conference entitled "Charismatic Renewal: Yesterday and Today and Tomorrow" will be held in Fuggi, Italy, and will be attended by more than 1,000 delegates from some 70 countries.

A special congress for 300 leaders in the charismatic movement entitled "Maturing in the Spirit" will also be held in Fuggi, from June 9-11.

Optional pilgrimages to Assisi or San Giovanni Rotondo will also be offered. During this congress the "ICCRS hopes to hear the Lord in prayer, seeking his vision and plans for CCR in the world, in the third millennium ahead of us," said Pesare.

In anticipation of the events, Pesare said "a campaign of prayer and Eucharistic adoration has been launched at the international level on the Internet as spiritual preparation for this intense time."

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## Introduction

The Catholic Charismatic Renewal as it exists today is the outgrowth from a retreat held in February 1967 of several faculty members and students from Duquesne University. What happened quickly spread to graduate students and professors at the University of Notre Dame and others serving in campus ministry in Lansing, Michigan. It continued to spread so that, as of this date, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal exists in over 238 countries in the world, having touched over 100 million Catholics in its nearly 40-year existence. <sup>1</sup>

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## History in the Church

The charismatic gifts (tongues, prophecy, healing, deliverance, etc.) made their definitive appearance in the life of the Church on **Pentecost Sunday**. In the book of Acts, St. Luke writes:

*"When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."* **(Acts 2:1-4)**

Why did these manifestations of the charismatic gifts, such as tongues and prophecy, not remain a normal part of the life of Christians throughout the centuries? Several explanations have been put forward. In *Baptism in the Holy Spirit and Christian Initiation* (and a much shorter popular version, *Fanning the Flame: The Holy Spirit and Christian Initiation*) Frs. Kilian McDonnell and George Montague advance one explanation. They assert that the "charismatic gifts" were a normal part of the experience of the sacraments of Christian initiation and public liturgical worship in the early Church. They also claim that the gifts fell into disuse when large-scale conversions to Christianity occurred after Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire in the 300s. Many common people converted because they followed a tribal or political leader. Thus it was difficult for the Church to adequately catechize these people to expect the manifestation of the charismatic gifts in connection with the sacraments of Christian initiation.

Dr. Scott Hahn, a popular biblical scholar and teacher, suggests another explanation for the outpouring of the charismatic gifts in the early Church and in our time. In a series of articles in *New Covenant* magazine, he puts forward the argument that God has given pentecostal phenomena in several ages — in the Old Testament, in the early Church, and today. He claims that these manifestations have been signs of mercy and imminent judgment first of all to those outside the covenant and then to God's own rebellious people. Thus he sees the manifestation of charismatic gifts within the heart of the Catholic Church to be a great grace for a new wave of evangelization — and a warning of imminent judgment if we do not make use of this grace.

In any case, there have been manifestations of these gifts in isolated instances throughout the Church's history, often in the lives of saints and their followers in movements for Church renewal. The charismatic gifts, however, did not again make their appearance on a widespread scale in the life of Christians until this and the last century.

At the end of the previous century, **Pope Leo XIII** is said to have had a vision of God allowing Satan to test the Church during the twentieth century; this deeply disturbing vision prompted him to compose the prayer to St. Michael the Archangel. Furthermore, in response to the request of Blessed Elena Guerra (the founder of the Oblates of the Holy Spirit), Leo began the new century by chanting the *Veni, Creator Spiritus*. He also asked the bishops of the world to join him in making a novena to the Holy Spirit for the renewal of the Church.

Some have pointed out that this manifestation of the charismatic gifts may have been God's answer to **Pope John XXIII**'s prayer in preparation for the Second Vatican Council: "Lord, renew Your wonders in this our day as by a new Pentecost." The charismatic renewal spread throughout the Catholic Church, primarily through prayer groups and "Life in the Spirit Seminars" (designed to lead people to a deeper experience of the Holy Spirit).

In general, the Church has encouraged the Charismatic Renewal, provided it is properly grounded in Church teaching and submissive to Church authority. In the past, there have been problems regarding teaching and authority in some "covenant communities" associated with the Renewal, but these problems have been largely addressed. It is important to note that for the mainstream of the renewal, the focus has been more on personal conversion to Jesus and renewed appreciation of the Spirit's presence than on the charismatic gifts alone. The charismatic gifts are seen as means to evangelize and to draw people into a closer relationship with Jesus.

In 1969, two years after the Renewal began, the **National Conference of Catholic Bishops** (NCCB) "affirmed the good fruits of the Renewal."

In 1975, **Pope Paul VI**, personally invited the renewal to hold its annual conference in Rome.

For further information on papal statements supporting the charismatic renewal within the Church, we suggest the book *Open the Windows: The Popes and the Charismatic Renewal*, edited by Kilian McDonnell (Greenlawn Press).

Following the lead of Popes Paul VI and John Paul II, the Catholic bishops of many countries — including the United States — have encouraged the efforts of the Charismatic Renewal while urging close collaboration with Church authorities. The bishops of the United States, in their 1984 pastoral letter to the American Church on the Charismatic Renewal, wrote "...the charismatic renewal is rooted in the witness of the gospel tradition: Jesus is Lord by the power of the Spirit to the glory of the Father."

In 1997, the bishops wrote, "encourage[d] those in the Renewal...to continue in faithful cooperation with the mission and the vision of the local church in which they serve."

(The above quotes are drawn from *Grace for the New Springtime*, published by the NCCB's *Ad Hoc* Committee for Catholic Renewal; call 800-235-8722 for the document's availability). It is because the Holy Spirit Himself is the Principle of all sanctification and evangelization that the Charismatic renewal, which emphasizes this fact, contains so much potential for increasing the effectiveness of the apostolate.

Before answering questions from an assembly of more than 100 Bishops and Cardinals from all over the world,

**Cardinal Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI)** also referred to his meeting with Renewal in the Spirit:

*"I have had the joy and the grace to see young Christians touched by the power of the Holy Spirit..."*



*At a time of exhaustion, when there was talk of 'a winter of the Church,' the Holy Spirit was creating a new spring."*

*... The challenge today is not to allow the faith to withdraw into closed groups, but to have it enlighten everyone and speak to everyone. If we go back to the Church of the first centuries, the Christians were few, but they caught people's attention because they were not a closed group. They carried a general challenge to all which touched all.*

*Today we also have a universal mission: to make present the real answer to the demand of a life that corresponds to the Creator. The Gospel is for everyone and the movements can be of great help, because they have the missionary impulse of the early times, even in the smallness of their numbers, and they can give impetus to the life of the Gospel in the world.* ZENIT990617 (from Press Release – Pontifical Council for the Laity 02-03-2002) More details can be read at [Cardinal Ratzinger and Ecclesial Movements](#)



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## John Paul II

The late Pope John Paul II was very supportive of the Catholic charismatic renewal and met dozens of times with renewal leaders to give encouragement and guidance. John Paul II, who was pope for 26 years, addressed Catholic charismatic groups on more than 25 occasions. He called the movement **"a force for the renewal of the Church."** In 1979, he told believers: **"I have always belonged to this renewal in the Holy Spirit."** (Charisma Magazine, June 14, 2005). That same year he also told charismatic leaders meeting in Rome, **"I am convinced that this movement is a sign of the Spirit's action...a very important component in the total renewal of the Church"** (*Open the Windows*, p. 26).

In an address to the ICCRO Council, March 14, 1992, Pope John Paul II said, **"At this moment in the Church's history, the Charismatic Renewal can play a significant role in promoting the much-needed defense of Christian life in societies where secularism and materialism have weakened many people's ability to respond to the Spirit and to discern God's loving call.** More details can be read at [Address to ICCRO Council](#)



In 1996, he wrote to Catholic Charismatics saying, **"How can we fail to praise God for the abundant fruit which in recent decades the Renewal in the Spirit has brought about in the lives of individuals and in communities? Countless people have come to appreciate the importance of Sacred Scripture for Christian living they have acquired a new sense of the value of prayer and a profound yearning for holiness, many have returned to the sacraments, and a great number of men and women have achieved a deeper understanding of their baptismal call, and have committed themselves to the Church's mission with admirable dedication."** More details can be read at [To Catholic Charismatics](#)

While meeting with some 500,000 representatives of various movements in the Catholic Church on the Eve of Pentecost 1998, John Paul II boldly proclaimed: **"Open yourselves docilely to the gifts of the Spirit! Accept gratefully and obediently the charisms which the Spirit never ceases to bestow on us."**

In a homily in May 2004 he said, **"...Thanks to the Charismatic Movement, a multitude of Christians, men and women, young people and adults have rediscovered Pentecost as a living reality in their daily lives. I hope that the spirituality of Pentecost will spread in the Church as a renewed incentive to prayer, holiness, communion and proclamation..."** ([CELEBRATION OF FIRST VESPERS OF PENTECOST HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II Saturday, 29 May 2004](#))

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## Catechism

Regarding the gifts of Pentecost or the Spirit, the Church makes proper distinctions. In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*, the Church states that "grace is first and foremost the gift of the Spirit who justifies and sanctifies us" (CCC no. 2003). The Church also says, in paragraph 2003, that graces are sacramental graces — gifts proper to the Sacraments — or special graces also called charisms, which in Greek refers to "gratuitous gifts." These are the graces that the Church calls the extraordinary gifts of prophecy, tongues or others, but which are always at the service of sacramental grace and the common good of the Church. These gifts are at the service of charity, which St. Paul says builds up the Church.

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## Biblical References

Scriptural references can be found to support many of the common expressions of Catholic Charismatics ...

Intense praising of GOD,

- ***"Shout joyfully to the LORD all you lands; worship the LORD with cries of gladness; come before HIM with joyful song"*** (Psalm 100 1-2)
- ***"Let them praise HIS Name in festive dance and make music with the tambourine and lyre."*** (Psalm 149:3)
- ***"Proclaim the greatness of HIS Name, loudly sing HIS praises, With music on the harp and all stringed instruments; sing out with joy as you proclaim:"*** (Sirach 39:15)
- ***"Shout for joy, O daughter Zion! Sing joyfully, O Israel! Be glad and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem!"*** (Zephaniah 3:14)

The of raising hands in praise and worship

- ***...lifting my hands toward YOUR holy place*** (Ps 28:2)
- ***...I will lift up my hands, calling on YOUR name.*** (Psalm 63:5)
- ***"Lift your hands toward the sanctuary, and bless the LORD."*** (Psalm 134:2)

The clapping of hands

- ***"All you peoples, clap your hands, shout to GOD with joyful cries."*** (Psalm 47:1)

Speaking in tongues

- ***"The HOLY SPIRIT fell upon all who were listening to the word...for they (the circumcised believers who had accompanied Peter) could hear them speaking in tongues and glorifying GOD."*** (Acts 10:44-46)
- ***"And when Paul laid hands on them, the HOLY SPIRIT came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied."*** (Acts 19:6)
- ***"...in the same way, the SPIRIT too comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the SPIRIT itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings. And the ONE who searches hearts knows what is the intention of the SPIRIT, because it intercedes for the holy ones according to GOD's will."*** (Romans 8:26-27)
- ***"So, brothers, strive eagerly to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues, but everything must be done properly and in order."*** (1 Corinthians 14:39-40)

And in general"

- ***"These signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover"*** (Mk 16: 17-18).
- ***"There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same SPIRIT.... To each individual the manifestation of the SPIRIT is given for some benefit. To one is given through the SPIRIT the expression of wisdom; to another the expression of knowledge according to the same SPIRIT; to another faith by the same SPIRIT; to another mighty deeds; to another prophecy; to another discernment of spirits; to another varieties of tongues; to another interpretation of tongues. But one and the same SPIRIT produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person as HE wishes."*** (1 Corinthians 12:4,7-11).
- ***"Come to ME, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest."*** (Matthew 11:28)
- ***"When HE said to them, "I AM", they turned away and fell to the ground."*** (John 18:6)

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## Conclusion

If we look at the Charismatic Renewal in light of what you just read, we see that the movement of the Spirit works within the Church according to His will and according to the cooperation of the faithful. The Charismatic Renewal itself does not originate from a necessity to inform the Universal Church of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and her cooperation with them, but from a need among her members to better understand what these gifts are. At the same time, the movement recalls the subordination of the charismatic gifts to those gifts given through the sacraments — specifically, the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, as expressed in Isaiah 11:2-3, given to each Christian at Baptism and enlivened at Confirmation.

From what has been said about the charismatic gifts, namely that they are bestowed on the Church by the Holy Spirit for the building up of Christ's Mystical Body, it is clear that they cannot be a source of division, but rather serve to strengthen Christian unity. Moreover, one of the principle effects of an intimacy with the Holy Spirit is a profound humility. As such, it is important to distinguish between the behavior of individual persons and the Charismatic Renewal as a whole.

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## Sources:

1. *An Introduction to the Catholic Charismatic Renewal* by John and Therese Boucher [St. Anthony Messenger Press](#)
2. [Dan Offsay Information Specialist](#) 827 North Fourth Street Steubenville, OH 43952 800-MY-FAITH (800-693-2484) <http://www.cuf.org>
3. The New American Bible

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## "No Need to Fear Charismatic Renewal"

CASTEL GANDOLFO, Italy, SEPT. 26, 2003

Baptism in the Spirit makes the Catholic Charismatic Renewal a formidable means willed by God to revitalize Christian life, says **"the preacher of the Papal Household"**. Capuchin **Father Raniero Cantalamessa** made that point Thursday as a gathering of more than 1,000 delegates of Catholic Charismatic Renewal from 73 countries drew to a close. The delegates had gathered for a spiritual retreat and to reflect on holiness in light of John Paul II's apostolic letter "Novo Millennio Ineunte." Father Cantalamessa was the retreat master. Taking into account Protestant, evangelical and Pentecostal denominations, and some members of the Orthodox Church, it is estimated that 600 million Christians have had the charismatic experience.

Given his knowledge of the "charismatic" experience, ZENIT interviewed Father Cantalamessa just before the conclusion of the meeting.

Q: There are those in the Church who think that "baptism in the Spirit" is an invention of the charismatics, and that a name has been given to an experience that is not "catalogued" in the Church. Could you explain, from your own experience, what baptism in the Spirit is?

Father Cantalamessa: Baptism in the Spirit is not a human invention; it is a divine invention. It is a renewal of baptism and of the whole of Christian life, of all the sacraments.

For me, it was also a renewal of my religious profession, of my confirmation, and of my priestly ordination. The whole spiritual organism is revived as when wind blows on a flame. Why has the Lord decided to act at this time in such a strong way? We don't know. It is the grace of a new Pentecost.

It is not about Charismatic Renewal inventing baptism in the Spirit. In fact, many have received baptism in the Spirit without knowing anything about Charismatic Renewal. It is a grace; it depends on the Holy Spirit. It is a coming of the Holy Spirit which is manifested in repentance of sins, in seeing life in a new way, which reveals Jesus as the living Lord -- not as a personage of the past -- and the Bible becomes a living word. The fact is, this cannot be explained.

There is a revelation with baptism, because the Lord says that whoever believes will be baptized and saved. We received baptism as children and the Church pronounced our act of faith, but the time comes when we must ratify what happened at baptism. This is an occasion to do so, not as a personal effort, but under the action of the Holy Spirit.

One cannot say that hundreds of millions of people are in error. In his book on the Holy Spirit, Yves Congar, that great theologian who did not belong to Charismatic Renewal, said that, in fact, this experience has changed profoundly the lives of many Christians. And it is a fact. It has changed them and initiated paths of holiness.

Q: How do you carry out your ministry as Papal Household preacher given your experience in Charismatic Renewal?

Father Cantalamessa: For me, everything that has happened since 1977 is the fruit of my baptism in the Spirit. I was a university professor. I was dedicated to scientific research in the history of Christian origins. And when I accepted this experience, not without resistance, I then had the call to leave it all and be available for preaching. My appointment as Papal Household preacher also came after I experienced this "resurrection." I see it as a great grace. After my religious vocation, Charismatic Renewal has been the most marked grace in my life.

Q: From your point of view, do the members of Charismatic Renewal have a specific vocation in the Church?

Father Cantalamessa: Yes and no. Charismatic Renewal, it must be said and repeated, is not an ecclesial movement. It is a current of grace that is meant to transform the Church -- preaching, the liturgy, personal prayer, Christian life.

So it is not a spirituality as such. The movements have a spirituality and emphasize a particular aspect, for example, charity. First of all, Charismatic Renewal does not have a founder. No one thinks of attributing a founder to Charismatic Renewal because it is something that started in many places in different ways. And it does not have a

spirituality; it is Christian life lived in the Spirit.

However, it can be said that as the people who have lived this experience are, socially, a reality -- they are people who do certain gestures, pray in a certain way -- then a social reality can be identified whose role is simply to be available so that others can have the same experience, and then disappear.

Cardinal Leo Jozef Suenens, who was the great protector and supporter of Charismatic Renewal in its beginnings, said that the final destiny of Charismatic Renewal might be to disappear when this current of grace has spread throughout the Church.

Q: As you are about to finish preaching a retreat attended by 1,000 Charismatic delegates from all over the world, what message would you like to give believers who do not know the Renewal?

Father Cantalamessa: I want to say to the faithful, to bishops, to priests, not to be afraid. I don't know why there is fear. Perhaps, in some measure, because this experience began in other Christian confessions, such as Pentecostals and Protestants.

However, the Pope is not afraid. He has spoken of the ecclesial movements, and also of Charismatic Renewal, as signs of a new springtime of the Church, and he often stresses the importance of this. And Paul VI said it was an opportunity for the Church.

There is no need for fear. There are episcopal conferences, for example in Latin America -- this is true of Brazil -- where the hierarchy has discovered that Charismatic Renewal is not a problem. It is part of the solution to the problem of Catholics who have left the Church because they don't find in it a living word, a lived Bible, the possibility of expressing the faith in a joyful manner, in a free way, and Charismatic Renewal is a formidable means that the Lord has given the Church so that one can live an experience of the Spirit, Pentecostal, in the Catholic Church, without the need to leave the Church.

Nor should Charismatic Renewal be regarded as an "island" where some emotional people get together. It is not an island. It is a grace meant for all the baptized. The external signs can be different, but in its essence, it is an experience meant for all the baptized.

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